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116th CBCT and Supporting Units Continue Preparations for a Historic Rotation

By 116th CBCT Public Affairs

Fort Irwin, Calif.--August 7--Soldiers and military vehicles from around the U.S. converge at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. as preparations continue for the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team's (CBCT) historic rotation.

An advance contingent of the 116th CBCT is preparing to receive over 5,500 soldiers over the next few days from National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve, and Army active duty units. Soldiers continue to unload the units' equipment and are moving it to the staging site adjacent to the Rotational Unit Bivouac Area.

"This is a massive movement for the organization," said Col. Russel Johnson, 116th Commander. "It can be very challenging when you have this many pieces to track; hundreds of vehicles and thousands of soldiers, working in austere conditions and the heat."

The 116th will spend a week preparing for tactical operations. They will begin the rotation conducting troop and company live-fire gunnery, then conduct large-scale maneuvers against an



Yermo, Calif. -- Spc. Jason Honn, Det. 1, HHC/3-116 Combined Arms Battalion, guides a large truck off the train cars in preparation for its movement to Fort Irwin, California, in support of the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team's National Training Center Rotation.

opposing force considered one of the toughest in the world, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. The 10-day exercise is the U.S. Army's most challenging training for heavy mechanized forces and pushes the unit's soldiers and equipment to extremes.

Warfighting operations is nothing new for the 116th. The unit conducted two rotations to Iraq in 2004 and 2010 where it fought insurgents using small-unit tactics. This time, the enemy they face knows and they train on U.S. tactics and is using hundreds of armored vehicles against the 116th. "The Brigade's soldiers are ready," said Johnson. "The biggest challenge we have faced preparing for this rotation is relearning how to conduct force-on-force, large-

scale operations. We are using the Army's most modern tanks and infantry fighting vehicles as well as having the training and desire to fight a good fight."

One point Johnson stressed, "It isn't about winning or losing the battles. It is about taking the lessons learned from those battles and using them to develop and refine our skills as a fighting unit."

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